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Alex Rodriguez -- a victim of hubris in a modern-day Greek tragedy

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The ancient Greek tragedies involved the downfall of the hero being caused by what the classical scholars call "hubris." Because human nature remains constant, we know the Greeks were onto something.

Hubris causes many heroic figures to fall even in our time and no better example can be found than the Yankee slugger Alex Rodriguez.

If the definition of "hubris" is excessive pride or defiance of the gods leading to a tragic downfall, then A-Rod defines a tragic hero. The only remaining question is how tragic a fall will he endure?

Some tragic figures behave so badly they turn the public against them. Others manage to take their fall and survive. Think of the defiant Bill Clinton who has remained so wildly popular he is cheered like a rock star whenever he gathers a crowd. The Chris Christie play is still in its first act and we cannot be sure it is a tragedy.

In baseball we have watched as Pete Rose managed his public affairs so badly he is reduced to sitting at a Las Vegas casino signing his name for those willing to pay the small fee he charges. Rose never understood the American public will forgive just about anyone for just about anything so long as the offender makes a truly credible act of contrition. One must appear to be sorry.

Up to now A-Rod has loudly proclaimed his innocence. The decision by the Baseball arbitrator this past weekend affirmed the suspension by Commissioner Bud Selig of Rodriguez while reducing the duration from 211 games to 162 games. Last night, CBS News ran a devastating segment on "60 Minutes" in which much of the case against Rodriguez was displayed. It was not pretty.

Commissioner Selig and his second in command Rob Manfred defended their case. Indeed, Manfred made a telling point when he explained there was nothing in the record before the arbitrator that reflected any denial by Rodriguez of the allegations made by the Commissioner. In a maneuver that sealed his fate, Rodriguez chose to stalk out of the arbitration proceeding without ever testifying. Talk about hubris and defiance of the gods.

If Rodriguez chose to walk out of the hearing because he was told by some lawyer he would have a better chance with a federal judge to whose court Rodriguez now appears to be heading, the advice was absurdly wrong...

Legal experts give Rodriguez virtually no chance of overturning the decision of the arbitrator. Federal law in cases like this one gives great weight to the decision of an arbitrator where the arbitration is agreed upon by parties to a collective bargaining agreement.

The federal court will interfere only in the extremely rare case the arbitrator was corrupted or acted in total disregard of the applicable law. Imagine the lawyers for A-Rod having to explain why he walked out of the hearing and refused to assert any defense? One who defies the gods will have to live with their angry reaction.

In the Greek tragedies, the hero has outsized talents. Rodriguez was a superb ball player but, like Rose, he cheated and fell victim to his own hubris in not seeing how his defiance of the baseball laws would bring him crashing down. Like Rose, he will take a long

time to confront the reality of the mess he has created for himself.

I doubt he will ever play again in the big leagues.

My question is will he be able to hold onto enough of his millions to take care of himself and his family for the long years ahead.

Perhaps he will be another Clinton and not another Rose. Yet the Greek tragedies are called tragedies for a reason.

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